

(Continued from Third page.)

from the Maramichi district alone. Beaubair, the Governor, was among them. The bodies were buried at Beaubair's Point, but their graves were torn open through the wearing away of the banks of the Maramichi River. The vessel which conveyed Wolfe's body to England ran ashore there, and a boat's crew, who landed to obtain water, were massacred. The Captain retaliated by killing a number of natives and burning the Catholic chapel at Nequac. He reported that there was a pestilence prevailing at that time.

Whether these diseases had any connection, near or remote, with leprosy, no one knows. The coast is bleak and sterile and full of swamps, which can not be healthy. For generations the people have lived on fish, oats and potatoes. Their houses are stifling in winter, every crack being closed to exclude the frost and biting east wind; while in summer it is apparent to the least sensitive nose that they are ignorant of the virtues of drainage.

The first case of leprosy seems to have been detected in 1817, but, no doubt, the disease had existed for some time before. For years it was left to run its course. The lepers worked as long as they were able, married and had children, and when the end was near went to bed and died their terrible death without seeing a doctor. It was not until 1844 that the Government of New Brunswick took the matter in hand and opened a close hospital on Sheldrake Island. A local Health Board, with the powers of a vigilance committee, had charge. The fisherman who was unlucky enough to be driven upon Sheldrake was entombed for the rest of his days, for it was an inflexible rule that a person who once touched the island should not leave it alive.

One or two women were employed to do chores. When they washed the clothes they used hooks and sticks; when they had cooked the food they handed it out with tongs. No attempt was made to alleviate the sufferings of the inmates. A doctor called occasionally, but there was no organized system of treatment. The lepers waited on themselves and dressed their own sores as best they could. Many of them became insane. Apart from the amount of suffering, every species of vice flourished along with every form of inhumanity. That is how Father Gervase summed up the history of Sheldrake. Members of the Health Board plundered the institution. Two persons not infected at all were shut up by relatives who profited by their incarceration. Harrowing scenes took place when the constables went to arrest a leper. His friends usually offered violent resistance, and on being overpowered followed him and his captors to the boat and filled the air with lamentations and curses. The hospital was such a hell that the lepers preferred to hide in the swamps and die alone. Some escaped to Gaspé. Others committed suicide. More than one got off to the United States.

The building at Tracadie was erected nearly forty years ago, and at first was not managed any better than Sheldrake. The Provincial Government imagined that the disease could be got rid of by simply imprisoning the sufferers, where as it exists in the blood of a number of families and is liable to break out perhaps for generations to come. Through the efforts of the Hon. T. W. Anglin, formerly member for the county, the Dominion Government was induced to take charge of the place in 1879. Prior to that a band of nuns from the Hotel Dieu in Montreal came down at the request of Bishop Rogers and offered their services as nurses. When the nuns took possession they pulled down a high board fence bristling with spikes that surrounded the building, dragged out the old wooden beds, and set fire to them, and to the bed-clothes as well, and effected sweeping reforms in the entire internal economy. The Health Board was virtually abolished and the nuns made supreme. They nurse, wash and care for the lepers with their own hands, subject to the advice of the surgeon. Instead of being treated as criminals, the patients have a comfortable home, and are allowed to stroll about the grounds, to fish, shoot and go boating. The result is that those afflicted have no longer to be hunted down like wild beasts, but are brought to the Sisters or come of their own accord as soon as the disease manifests itself. The number of patients is diminishing. At Sheldrake there were often as many as fifty at one time in the hospital and as many more hiding outside. Now fifteen or twenty is the average, and the utmost care is taken in watching the leprosy families, so that new cases may be promptly dealt with. The first symptom of the disease is the appearance of white patches on the body. This is accompanied by a high fever, which distends the eyes. The white spots change to a chocolate color and the limbs begin to swell. By and bye, fever continuing all the while, ulcers appear, and the skin and flesh are loose and marked with ridges. The fingers and toes contract, the feet and legs become insensible to pain, the voice grows thin and piping like that of a cretin, the eyes and nostrils are disfigured, the mouth is deformed, then the throat is attacked and the leper appears to die of suffocation. The insensibility to pain in the lower limbs is so great that lepers sitting by the stove have been severely burnt without knowing it. I should say the last task a refined woman would care to undertake is that of nursing a Tracadie leper. The sights are shocking beyond description. Nevertheless the nuns are always cheerful. They get a knowledge of medicine at Montreal, and from their long experience here can tell you to a month or so how long a new patient is likely to live. Some patients display extraordinary vitality, others die quickly. Thus far no permanent cures have been effected. Patients who appeared to be cured and

(Concluded on Sixth Page.)

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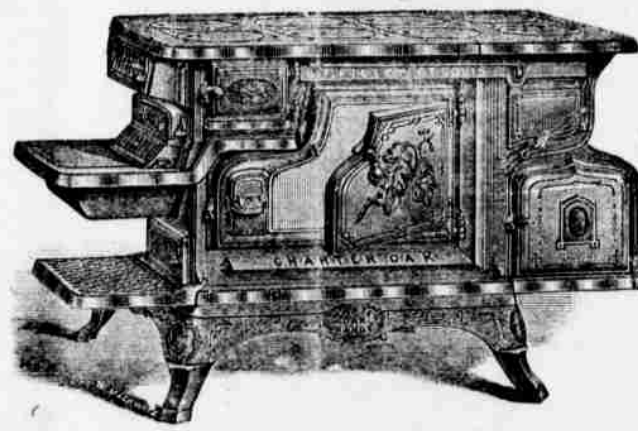
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